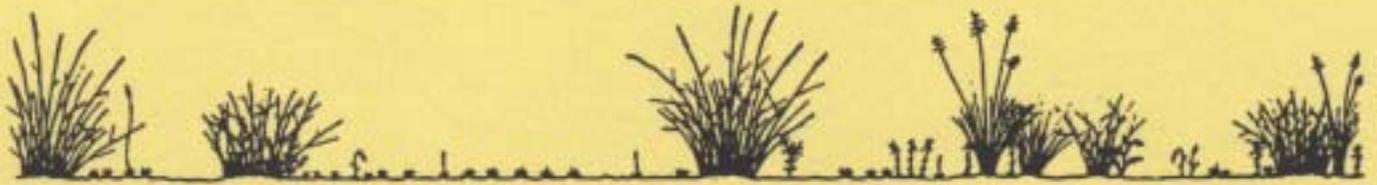




Identification of Conservation Priorities for and Threats to Palouse Grassland and Canyon Grassland Remnants in Idaho, Washington, and Oregon

prepared by Bertie J. Weddell
and Juanita Lichthardt



TECHNICAL BULLETIN NO. 98-13

IDAHO BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

October 1998

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AND OREGON

Prepared by
Bertie J. Weddell
and
Juanita Lichthardt
Palouse Land Trust
Kenworthy Plaza
109 South Washington
Moscow, Idaho
83843

September 30, 1998

for the

Bureau of Land Management
Cottonwood District
Route 3, Box 181
Cottonwood, ID 83522
Order No. 1422D065P980006

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Abstract

This report summarizes the results of Phase 1 of a project designed to assess threats to Palouse Grassland and Canyon Grassland communities and associated sensitive plant taxa and to increase the number of high quality occurrences of these elements that are protected through private conservation agreements. This work was funded through a challenge cost-share agreement between the Bureau of Land Management, Cottonwood Resource Area, and the Palouse Land Trust of Moscow, Idaho.

Data on element occurrences of plant communities and rare or endemic plant taxa associated with Palouse Grasslands or Canyon Grasslands of Washington, Oregon, or Idaho were obtained from the Idaho Fish and Game Conservation Data Center, the Washington Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program, and the Oregon Division of State Lands/Oregon Nature Conservancy Natural Heritage Program. A total of 308 of these elements occurred on sites that currently are not protected. These sites were ranked in terms of size, proximity to other occurrences of Palouse or Canyon Grassland elements, number of elements at the site, and quality of occurrence. Twenty sites were identified as conservation priorities that are currently unprotected. In addition baseline monitoring at five sites, reconnaissance visits to eight sites, and comparisons with data obtained at three sites a minimum of 35 years ago, indicated that exotic species are a widespread threat to Palouse and Canyon Grassland communities.

Acknowledgments

This project was funded through a challenge cost-share agreement between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Cottonwood Resource Area, and the Palouse Land Trust of Moscow, Idaho. Data on element occurrences were contributed by the Idaho Fish and Game Conservation Data Center (CDC), the Washington Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program (WNHP), and the Oregon Division of State Lands/Oregon Nature Conservancy Natural Heritage Program (ONHP). Rex Crawford, Robin Estes, John Gamon, and Jack McMillen, of the WNHP; Jimmy Kagan and Eleanor Gaines of the ONHP; Bob Moseley, Steve Rust, and George Stephens of the CDC; Barbara Benner of the Spokane District of the BLM; and Roger Holland of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, provided information and helpful suggestions. Spatial analysis and mapping of element occurrences was contributed by the University of Idaho Gap Analysis Program's Landscape Dynamics Laboratory, where Eva Strand was very helpful. Janice Hill of the Idaho Nature Conservancy provided information on rare plant populations on the George property. Archie and Mary George, Jacie and Wayne Jensen, Washington State University, Washington Department of Transportation, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife granted permission for lands to be used as monitoring sites. Karen Gray and Melinda Trask assisted with some portions of the field work. Jim Roberts and Jim Croft contributed information on recent changes in the flora of Kamiak Butte. All of these contributions are gratefully acknowledged. The support and assistance with all aspects of this project provided by Craig Johnson of the Cottonwood District of the BLM are especially appreciated.